

Testimony of Bob Gorman

Appropriations Committee

February 22, 2013

Department of Rehabilitation Services Budget

My name is Bob Gorman, I live in Torrington, CT. I have been employed for the past 15 years as an Independent Living Advocate at Independence Northwest. We are a Center for Independent Living located in Naugatuck, CT. We are one of five Centers for Independent Living located in the State of Ct.

We provide direct services for all individuals who have a disability in the northwestern corner of the state.

I am here tonight asking you to restore our funding for the 2013-2014 budget as we provide critical services to consumers in need.

Without our assistance many of our consumers who are have physical and or mental health disabilities would end up homeless, in need of nursing home care or institutionalized therefore adding greater costs to the State of Ct.

Centers for Independent Living also save the state money by making it possible for people with disabilities to find health care assistance, employment, transportation, suitable housing, transitioning consumers from nursing homes to live in the community and a myriad of other services.

Our services allow an individual to live with dignity, contribute to their community and be independent.

Let me tell you about the positive results of consumers that we have assisted.

Mike, from Bethel, has a teenage daughter who was living on a heart valve pump machine in a New York hospital awaiting a heart transplant. He is a small business owner and paid over \$20,000 per year for his daughter's health insurance premium. Mike contacted our center looking for assistance. We were able to enroll Mike's daughter in a Medicare Advantage Plan at a cost of \$120 per month, a savings of over \$18,000 per year.

In another situation I assisted an amputee, who lives in Waterbury, who had not left the bedroom of her home in eighteen months. Her bedroom is on the second floor of a home she shares with her elderly mother. Our agency funded the cost of purchasing and installing a stair lift to enable her to have access to her entire home. It was the first time in two years she was able to enjoy Christmas with her entire family. In addition Independence Northwest paid for an exterior stair lift for accessibility to her backyard and the flower garden she now has.

Finally Linda, from Waterbury, is living with mental illness and had her Section 8 voucher taken away by her local housing authority because Linda violated the conditions of their inspection policy. Due to her psychological impairments she was too afraid to open the door when the inspectors arrived. She went to the appeal meeting with a friend and the hearing officer did not take into account that Linda's disability was a major factor in the inspection process. I advocated for Linda to have the housing authority provide a reasonable accommodation along with some of her medical information and asked them to reconsider their decision. They both agreed and their decision was rescinded and the Section 8 voucher was reinstated.

I am asking that you restore our funding so that we may continue to provide these vital services for individuals living with disabilities.